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Send Fewer Targets Abroad

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The Vice President's Task Force on Combating Terrorism has concluded that U.S. policy is basically sound and has been carried out with increasing effectiveness. It recommends a long list of improvements but no significant change in the overall strategy or how the government is organized to deal with the problem.

We have not solved the problem, as we have not eliminated other types of criminal activity, but we have come a long way. Additional steps should be taken.

The Task Force report acknowledges that we are dealing with criminal activity, and small groups, but it emphasizes a military reply. Other countries view terrorism as a police problem and deal with it on that basis. The U.S. should be cooperating more with police operations abroad.

We have been the leader at the foreign-policy level and, as the Libyan case shows, ahead of our allies in recognizing the problem and trying to deal with it. We have made major strides on intelligence and sharing of information. But in day-to-day police work, the U.S. is not as good a partner as it should be. The anti-terrorism police training program started by the State Department in 1983 will certainly help, but it has nothing to do with daily operations.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation should be given a broad mandate to work closely with foreign law-enforcement officials and should have the necessary agents overseas to do that. The U.S. emphasizes a military response because that is the national force that we have. We do not have a national police force. Moreover, under the National Security Act of 1947, the FBI withdrew from overseas and left the intelligence and counter-intelligence job to the Central Intelligence Agency. But combating terrorism is an operational police matter that State, Defense and the CIA are unequipped to handle.

After the second bombing of the Ameri-

can Embassy in Beirut, Congress approved beefing up security for government personnel overseas. The secretary of state asked Adm. Bobby Inman to head a panel to review all security programs. The panel recommended more than a twofold increase—to \$800 million a year over five years—in security funding. But at the time neither the panel nor the State Department, which did the cost estimates, asked whether all the personnel overseas from two-dozen U.S. agencies have to be there. A review is now in progress. If so, the recommended enhancements are clearly needed. But could some of the work be done just as well in the U.S.? Could the staff be slimmed down and put into smaller or fewer buildings so the sites would be a smaller target and easier to protect?

These are difficult questions for the State Department because it has less than 30% of this personnel and would probably prefer not to fight the bureaucratic battles such questions raise. Clearly, a 20% cut in staff would not result in a similar cut in security costs, because a building and basic operational support are needed whether there are 100 or 125 people. But the savings would be substantial. Also saved would be the cost of housing, allowances and travel, which is something on the order of \$100,000 per employee each year. Before all the Inman panel recommendations are literally set in concrete, we need to reassess our overseas personnel requirements.

The vice president's panel is correct in finding that, progress aside, terrorism will grow as it has each year for the past two decades. All the more reason, it would seem, to adjust the U.S. approach as needed to keep pace with the threat.

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